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SUBJECT : FDP Parliamentary Leadership Reshuffled

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Pol 12 Germ

On the eve of the FDP's federal convention, which takes place in Freiburg on January 29-31, the party's Bundestag delegation has reorganized its executive, electing Wolfgang Mischnick floorleader in place of Baron Knut von Kuehlmann-Stumm and replacing two deputy floorleaders as well. All but one of the 49 FDP deputies participated in the voting, which was done by secret ballot. The term of office of the new Parliamentary Group Directorate (Fraktionsvorstand) extends to the end of the current Bundestag legislative period (midsummer 1969), instead of the one-year period previously in effect.

In large part as a face-saving gesture, von Kuehlmann-Stumm was elected to the deputy floorleader position vacated by Mischnick; the former had been under attack by some of his colleagues as indecisive and offering too pale an image for a leader of the parliamentary opposition, and had tacitly agreed to the shift some months ago (see refairgram). In uncertain health and reportedly worried about the management of his private estate, von Kuehlmann-Stumm seems about to move into something like a figure-head role, with the actual direction of party strategy in the Bundestag passing more and more openly to Mischnick and Floor Whip Genscher, who -- together with his associate whip, Werner Mertes -- was re-elected without difficulty.

By narrow margins, incumbent deputy floorleaders Siegfried Zoglmann and William Borm (the sole FDP deputy from

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Berlin) were ousted from their jobs by Wolfram Dorn and Josef Ertl, respectively; the Zoglmann-Dorn decision had to be settled by a runoff ballot. Both contests reflected a settling of old personal scores. Zoglmann, whose active career as a politician got its start in the Hitler Youth, has been firmly lodged in the FDP's inner management circles throughout the postwar period, and for several years operated happily as a kind of hatchet man for the Northrhine-Westphalia wing of the party. A small and intense man with cricket-like agility and what appears to be a fixed sneer on his face, he has made few real friends in the party and in particular has alienated the restless "reform" elements. His successor, at 43, is a man of solid talent who has recently come into prominence as author of the FDP's alternative to the Government's emergency legislation program.

Borm's defeat by Ertl has some significance also as a symptom of the partial recovery of the FDP's so-called "conservative" wing, which has been besieged since the demise of the Erhard coalition by pressure for a more aggressive oppositional line, centering on demands for radical acceleration of the Government's cautious probes toward East Germany and Eastern Europe. As the party convention approaches, the conservatives have been moving to rally supporters, relying in part on the optimistic mood that has settled in over the FDP of late, giving rise to the feeling that internal disputes can be safely set aside, and each faction allowed its fair share of influence, while all together profit from dissatisfaction with the parties of the Grand Coalition. At 42, Ertl is the acknowledged strong man of the Bavarian FDP and a natural spokesman for the disgruntled conservatives. At the same time, Borm's ouster derives only in part from his outspoken "reform" attitude; though remarkably active for his age (72), he had never regarded his incumbency as deputy floorleader as anything other than a transitional arrangement.

The changes in the FDP's Bundestag leadership offer no clear forecast of the outcome of policy and personal differences expected to develop at Freiburg -- except perhaps to indicate that the FDP managers as always are alive to the necessity of compromise. At the convention, they may be expected to try to direct the energy of the internal conflicts outward by pointing everyone toward the vision of electoral rejuvenation in 1969; but it is a fair guess that the conflicts will remain.

MCGHEE